DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 296 483 EA 020 204

AUTHOR Greer, John T.
TITLE The Danforth Program for the Preparation of Principals: A Project Update. "Changing Roles and Power Relationships."
PUB DATE Apr 88
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 5-9, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; *College School Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Principals; *Program Effectiveness; School Districts; Teacher Attitudes; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Danforth Foundation

ABSTRACT

Over the years, admissions to programs of educational administration have been in the control of university personnel. Under the 18-month Danforth Request for Proposals projects, school districts and universities were to share responsibilities for the admission of program participants, and also for program content, fulltime internships, and the placement of program graduates in administrative positions. The sharing of responsibilities for admission and program content assumed different shapes, depending on the university involved. Few of the districts could furnish full time internships due to obstacles such as cost and principals' opposition to participants leaving their designated work for 10-week or longer periods. University personnel were skeptical toward shared responsibility for admissions and program content, whereas school district personnel were enthusiastic; university personnel liked the idea of full time internships, while school districts had difficulties in implementing them; and university personnel supported the policy of guaranteed administrative placement, whereas school district personnel saw this policy as a threat. Essentially, the results of the program show that cooperation between universities and school districts is difficult. Since funding has ceased, the continuation of the program at each site is questionable. (RG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. T. Greer
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED296483

THE DANFORTH PROGRAM FOR THE PREPARATION OF PRINCIPALS

A PROJECT UPDATE

"Changing Roles and Power Relationships"

John T. Greer

Georgia State University

The first purpose of this paper is to discuss how the call for shared responsibility in preparing school administrators changed the traditional power relationships between universities and school systems. A second is to describe the behavioral responses of personnel within the universities and the school systems when faced with the realities of new inter-institutional relationships. The final purpose is to describe plans for continuing the projects after the Danforth Foundation support ends.

Four major points of contact and cooperation were prescribed in the original Danforth Request for Proposals. There were to be shared responsibilities in matters related to identification of participants, program content, full time internships, and placement of graduates in entry level administrative posts.

It is easily recognized that the Danforth RFP challenged traditional university and school system spheres of influence and control. Universities have largely been unchallenged in admitting students to programs and determining program content. School

---

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans: April 6, 1988

EA 020 204

systems have likewise been dominant in deciding which field experiences they would allow or support and in the selection of persons for administrative posts.

Modifications To Traditional Relationships

Admission

Programs of educational administration have over the years exercised complete control over the admission process. True, special cases have been made from time to time when a person was recommended for a program by a special friend of the department such as a local school superintendent. Such exceptions, however, did not detract from the fact that the admissions process was in the control of university personnel.

The Danforth Program called for admission decisions to be at least shared by the school systems and the universities. Across the four projects, such sharing took on different forms. For example, one university indicated that individuals nominated by the school systems would be admitted to the Danforth Program. The university generally held to this position throughout its admission process. A second institution said much the same thing but added the proviso that all nominated students still had to meet the basic test score requirements of the university. The third institution said that while the school systems could nominate people (thereby creating the selection pool), the university would retain the final selection responsibility. It should be mentioned that the unevenness of university/school

system response was pretty well anticipated in the program. At no time was any university expected to conform to some pre-established standard of the Danforth Foundation or by the practice of other universities.

Program Content

The shared responsibility for program content likewise took on different configurations depending upon which university was involved. Two of the universities took the opportunity to gather a great deal of advice from participating school systems and launched major revisions of their introductory programs. A third used the opportunity to work with system personnel to try out new program components based on needs from the field. In this case, the program was viewed as an opportunity for upgrading the program and also for experimenting with programmatic themes heretofore not utilized. The fourth institution chose to modify its recently revised program through the insertion of additional field experiences under the supervision of school system principals.

The Internship

An integral part of the Danforth Program was a full time internship of at least ten weeks duration (one academic quarter). The internship was to be supported by the school system and substitutes were to be hired to cover the participants' responsibilities during the period. Supervision of the participant was to be a dual responsibility. The primary work would be done by a mentoring principal from the participant's system. It was expected that the mentoring principal would not be the student's

regularly assigned principal but one from another school of the system or even from outside the system.

Regardless of the original agreements, few school systems were able to provide full time internships. Several factors forced the changes. The most important was the overall cost of a full time internship. In an era of tight budgets and revenue shortfalls, several superintendents had to vacate their commitments to provide the full time internship. Modified internships took one of several forms: part time internships, full time internships for less than ten weeks, or summer school internships.

A second reason for modifying the original internship pattern was that principals resisted participants leaving their classrooms or other assignments for ten week or longer periods. This was a problem not anticipated by the superintendents. The typical corrective modification was to have several multiple week internships for the participants spread throughout the entire academic year.

Guaranteed Administrative Placement

At the time of this writing, it is too early to comment about the fulfillment of this commitment by the school systems. Across the project, it appears that superintendents are anticipating sufficient administrative vacancies in their systems to accommodate the Danforth graduates. Such is likely to be the case in the larger systems but less likely in the small, rural systems.

One other factor at work that may ease the situation is that many of the participants are already being identified and placed in entry level administrative posts long before their programs are completed.

Behavioral Responses Within Universities And School Systems

University Settings

At the department level, responses to the Danforth Program concept of shared responsibilities took the form that could be easily predicted. Professors have been arguing and struggling over such issues for as long as there have been departments of educational administration. Such was not the case, however, at the college and university levels.

College/university responses. Even though the Danforth Program had been warmly endorsed by Deans, Academic Vice Presidents, and University Presidents, many at the middle levels of the university hierarchy failed to support the commitments of shared responsibility made by the institution's leaders. In several cases these people set up such large stumbling blocks for students that major expenditures of time and energy were required to force decisions favorable to the program.

One program was particularly troubled by the actions of personnel in the admissions office. This was not a case of such persons misunderstanding the commitments made by their institutional leaders to the program. Rather, it was a desire to retain complete control over who was admitted or not admitted to

all programs of the college regardless of institutional commitments or possible consequences to the admissions office.

Such obstinateness forced the program planners to marshal superior resources to reverse the decision of the office. Long term consequences of playing such a "win/lose" strategy are yet to be realized but can readily be imagined.

Departmental responses. Within the departments, it was assumed that the majority of the professors would support the experimental program in varying degrees. Some professors would be hard to convince of the worthiness of the program but it was felt that at worst, such persons might be indifferent to the program. It was also expected that some, over time, would reverse themselves and come to support the program.

The struggles within the departments were most interesting. Typically, they were arguments over subject matter, learning settings and supervision of field experiences.

Subject matter disputes were basically differences of opinion about what content should be delivered and the order or sequence of the delivery process. Many professors believed strongly that the only way to teach their course, say school finance, was as they were teaching it. It was the pattern they had experienced as graduate students, a pattern handed down by the great scholars of the field. Furthermore, the pattern had worked well for the current professors who had spent many years preparing syllabi, bibliographies, and individual class formats and performances.

They were satisfied with the effort and the saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," was heard on more than one occasion.

The Danforth Program was not established to refute such efforts but did require these professors to focus on those portions of their courses that beginning principals absolutely needed to know to survive the first year. In the case of school finance, such survival knowledge and skills would include building a school budget, understanding those portions of the state finance program that affected individual schools, and so forth. The broader and more general insights into economic questions were to be set aside temporarily until the students had acquired some experience as school administrators.

This struggle was won by the Danforth Program people on some campuses and by the traditionalists on others. One Danforth Program looked very much like the institutions regular program for beginning administrators. Two programs were total revisions based on the survival skills strategy. The fourth program could be considered somewhere between the above two extremes with a combination of the traditional courses and new survival type learning modules.

The second type of struggle had to do with the setting for instruction. Here the opposing views were essentially campus versus field settings. On the one hand, there were sizable numbers of professors who for a variety of reasons believed that the academic classroom with ready access to libraries was the most

fruitful learning environment for soon to be administrators. The supporting argument for this position took the form that most Danforth participants were chosen out of on-going school situations. What they really needed to prepare them for their future careers was exposure to the rich body of literature and research on effective schools, supervision, law, and so forth.

The counter argument centered on the idea that the best place to teach a new principal how to survive was in the settings where the principal would be operating. The best place to learn about effective schools was in effective schools, the best place to learn effective supervision practices was in the field working with a person well skilled in such techniques, and so on.

It would be nice to report that the universities had all worked out a proper balance between campus and field settings but such was not the case. There was no unanimity among the institutions on this issue.

Across the entire program, basic learnings tended to be taught on the campuses. Notable exceptions were observed in all projects but except for the internship; field based, experiential learning resulted from individual professors being interested in taking students into the field to learn. To soften this generalization, one can fairly say that the Danforth programs did involve many more field visits, observations and shadowing activities during the academic phase than the typical preparation program. It was not possible, however, to overcome to any significant degree the bias held by the majority of professors for teaching on campus.

The final struggle or issue revolved about the nature of the professor's role in supervising interns. Here the contrast was between commonly accepted methods for supervising people in the field versus the expectations for field experiences held by the Danforth planners. Traditionally, supervision of interns or other field based students has consisted of college supervisors dropping in to the site regularly to discuss the work of the student with the building principal and with the student. Under optimum conditions, some sort of learning contract would have been established between the university and the student but the fulfillment of the contract would largely be the responsibility of the building principal. The university person would be responsible for ascertaining that reasonable progress was being made by the student.

In the Danforth Program, the internship was considered to be a key piece of the program. For that reason, it was expected that all of the interns would follow a carefully prescribed learning plan. Carrying out the plan would be a joint responsibility of the mentoring principal and the intern. Such was thought to be a growth experience, then, for both the intern and the principal. The responsibility of the college supervisor was to ascertain progress, serve as a resource to the learning team, and to coordinate meetings in which all interns could revue their experiences and learn from one another.

Once again, such an expectation received mixed reviews from department members. For the most part, the majority of the professors were indifferent, feeling that if the Danforth

facilitator wanted to go to all that extra work and trouble, it was the facilitator's privilege. Personally, however, most wished not to be involved.

School System Settings

The central power issue brought about by the Danforth Program within the school system centered on the belief that the Program was creating a favored or elite group of future administrators to the detriment of other professionals who had completed administrator preparation programs and possessed administrative credentials. The situation was worsened when it became known that a part of the school system's commitment was to guarantee entry level administrative positions to all graduates of the program. Probably the program would not have created such furor had it not been for the guaranteed placement feature.

The worst example of the problem was in the Cleveland State program. In a "worst case scenario," the teachers' union of the City of Cleveland blocked the inauguration of the program because it believed that the master contract gave the union a voice in the process of selecting persons for administrative positions. There is hope that in time this problem will be resolved but the problem was of sufficient magnitude to delay the entire program for at least a year.

Similar concerns were expressed by teacher groups across the entire program. In two of the remaining three settings, the commitment of guaranteed employment was simply ignored and the systems were released from this part of the commitment. In the third setting, the systems involved were non-union, large systems

with a multitude of administrative vacancies occurring each year. It appears that these systems are betting that suitable administrative vacancies will be available at the time the students graduate from the Danforth Program. In fact, one of the systems has already appointed its two students to instructional lead teacher positions and removed them from the classroom.

Plans For The Future

This paper was written during the final weeks of the eighteen month projects. Since no further funding is available, there is a very real question about the continuance of the effort at each site. This question has been discussed by the facilitators of the projects from the earliest days of the program. In effect, the facilitators came to believe that the real proof of the program would be realized in the subsequent editions of the projects after the Danforth funding ran out.

As has been characteristic of the entire program, plans for the future vary from site to site. At one university, the Danforth Program was designed as a replacement for the existing program. The success of the Danforth effort affirmed the institution's wisdom of moving to a new program. A new cadre of students has already been selected by the university and school systems for the second edition which is to begin this summer.

The other university which used the Danforth program to redesign its program was sidetracked in its implementation effort by a union problem. As mentioned earlier, there is hope that this project will begin in the near future.

A third university explored new ways of packaging and delivering course content during the Danforth project. Work is currently underway to discard current five credit hour course packages in favor of one, two, or three credit hour arrangements. Furthermore, these skill packages will largely be experienced in field settings. Recruitment at this setting is currently being planned for a Fall startup date.

The final university is something of an enigma. Prior to the beginning of the Danforth Program, the department had extensively revised its initial preparation program. The Danforth effort was viewed by the department members largely as an extension of the revised program, run largely by the Danforth facilitator. It is unclear what the future holds for the project at this university.

Conclusions

It is not easy to draw conclusions about the impact of the altered power relationships brought about by the Danforth Program. The picture will be clarified in the years to come. What can be concluded, however, is that on the four points that constituted the analysis of this paper (admission, program content, the internship, and guaranteed placement), the universities and school systems had different feelings regarding each point. On the matter of admissions, the school systems were delighted to be involved but the universities were somewhat skeptical. On the matter of program content, the same was true: the school systems felt their involvement was long overdue but the universities had reservations about such collaboration. With full time

internships, the universities were overjoyed with the prospect of their students having such an opportunity; the school systems, however, were having difficulty gathering the necessary resources for the program and in releasing people for the expected length of time. Finally, on the matter of guaranteed placement, the universities were again well pleased with the development seeing it as a way to accomplish many desirable objectives. The school systems were finding great difficulty in honoring such commitments.

A final statement would be that the Danforth type programs based on national commission reports that recommended greater cooperation between school systems and universities are not easily accomplished. Necessary changes are perhaps more numerous and of greater magnitude among universities. There seems to be a strong indication that a dramatically different professor is needed by most faculties to accomplish such programs. This does not mean that all existing professors need go into immediate retirement but it does mean that there is a critical shortage of people presently in departments with a commitment to field based programs. Even where such commitment is present, few have the requisite skills to insure that such experiences away from the campuses are rich and meaningful to the student.

Probably the most significant problem school systems face is how they are going move toward more cooperative programs. Programs such as the Danforth are promising for they produce future leaders with the qualifications desired by the system. The

problem is how to institute such programs when teachers groups view them as threats. As with most problems, there probably is some middle ground answer to this problem but the search for it will have to proceed delicately.

Other school system problems are essentially resource problems. Such problems are significant but do not require altered behavior patterns nor the addition of different types of persons.